

[Bertha Dlugatch]

[????] [??] [5?]

YIDDISH SONGS, SUPERSTITIONS AND MISCELLANY

by Arnold Manoff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Arnold Manoff

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace

DATE Sept 14, 1938

SUBJECT Yiddish songs, superstitions and miscellaneous bits

1. Date and time of interview Sept. 14, 1938 — late afternoon
2. Place of interview 151 East 170 St.
3. Name and address of informant Bertha Dlugatch 151 East 170 St.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Three room apt. on ground floor, converted into a corset shoppe, Mme Dee's, Bay windows display corseted and brassiered figures. Also surgical appliances, abdominal belts etc. Front room used for reception. Furnished modestly like that of struggling young Bronx dentist or doctor. Work room holds two sewing machines. Many spindles of lace, ribbon and rubber materials are suspended from the ceiling over the machines. There is a curtained space in the work room for fittings and where the customer can also eye a stock of silk stockings, bandaus etc. Location of shoppe a few yards from the Grand Concourse. 170th St. is a shopping center for the neighborhood. Baby carriages choke the sidewalks. Mme Dee's customers are mostly americanized middle class Jewish housewives. Most of them play penny poker, use make up. Smoke and talk about their husbands.

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Arnold Manoff

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace

DATE Sept. 14, 1938

SUBJECT YIDDISH SONGS, SUPERSTITIONS AND BITS

1. Ancestry Russian Jewish

2. Place and date of birth

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Age about 46. This is a delicate subject with this informant. Born in Russia. About 25 years in America

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

5. Education, with dates

Recently attended public school for adults.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Skilled corset maker

7. Special skills and interests

Interested in social life of the Jewish semi-cultural level. A bit of theatre, a bit of literature# dancing and much speculation about love and marriage.

8. Community and religious activities

Community activities include card parties and death benefit societies.

9. Description of informant

Rather stout but well corseted. Professional appearance. Graying hair cut mannishly, vivacious, personality when not subdued by business talk.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Arnold Manoff

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace

DATE Sept. 14, 1938

SUBJECT YIDDISH SUPERSTITIONS, SONGS AND BITS AS TOLD BY BERTHA
DLUGATCH TO ARNOLD MANOFF

If you leave something in the house you mussent go back for it [becu?] if you go back for it you will have a disappointment. Jewish people will not moove down from ahigh floor to a low floor becuz it's hod luck. Also is hod luck if you put a dress on the wrong side. You're supposed to leave it on the wrong side and go around like that. That's what Jewish women do. If a man passes you with an empty pail it's hod luck. If the pail is full then they say, oh boy, I'll have a lot of business today. Never take a cat with you when you move to a new apartment. A dog? A dog I don't know. It's no use with a dog becuz a dog will always find you out anyway.

I'll tell you a story about devils. We were brut op that devils turn into enimals. We lived in a little town in Russia near a little bridge. The devils were under the bridge also. That's what they told us. My brother used to go to cheder and he had to come back over the bridge in the nighttime. One night it was spring and we were afraid that the bridge would be torn op by the water, you 2 know, that rushes down in the spring. So we went, my mother and me, with a latern, it was a dark night. We went to wait for my brother by the bridge. So we got to the bridge with the latern and we started there to wait for my brother. Then all of a

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sudden we see a little goat that runs right under our noses in the middle of the bridge. So we ran away screaming into the town. We were sure that the devil stopped my brother from going over the bridge and turned him into a little goat. So pretty soon the whole town was op screaming and hollaring and so they kept it op and then my brother came home later.

I know another one I'll tell you. Also with devils. I used to pray and be scared and cry and one night I finished saying my prayers. What kind of prayers? Well you know in Hebrew they tell you you might die in your sleep. So we used to pray we shouldn't die. One night I finished praying and I look at the moon and I see soldiers on the moon with whips in their hands and when I look again and there are more soldiers and this time they are motching so I was scared you can imagine how I was scared. So I woke op my sister and I said to her, look at the moon, my god! there's a regela war going on op there. So she looked at the moon and she didn't see anything. Go to sleep, she said to me. So I looked at the moon and I saw a whole army of soldiers with horses and hatchets like the pogroms, you know about the pogroms, yes and they were fighting and I look and I look and they keep on fighting with horses a whole army full with soldiers. So I woke op my father and I said look whats on op in the moon. So he looks and he don't see nothing and he says to me I am crazy go to sleep you're crazy. What didn't I see on the moon that night and so I thought and I wondered to myself if I am great 3 and different than anybody else in the world.

I used to dream about falling. Yes, well you know Jack London says it's the monkey in us when we climbed trees and so I used to wonder about it until I read that it was something in us from the old days when we were animals. I'm sure it's Jack London I read it somewhere.

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While talking to me the informant had been working at her machine. Opposite her at the other machine a woman of about 35 was also working and every now and then she would interject a chuckle. This woman who later told me her name was Jessie Goldfluss and that she lived at 1181 Sheridan Ave., gave me the following:

This was told to me. Anyway. After the war when they first started skywriting a man was walking in the street and he saw the skywriting in the sky. He was a very religious man. When he saw it he started to prostrate himself on the ground in the middle of the street, because he thought, you know well he thought that the Messiah, somebody, Kind David or Solomon had come. He became very frightened and he thought he was going to die, so he became even more religious and he started to own up all his sins and all he saw was Chevrolet being advertised. That's true. It happened right here in America. It's a real story.

I got another story. A young feller was brought up in a very religious house and it just happened he was a choin Cohen , you know what that is? A priest. They told him he should never go near a hearse or a dead person. So one day he followed a hearse just to see what would happen to him. He wanted to see if he would die 4 like they told him. So he followed the hears all the way to the cemetery and nothing happened to him. So there went his religion. He was never religious after that. That's right here in New York. Yes. It's an American story. That happened to the boy when he was about ten years old. It must have been on the East side.

This informant works for Bertha Dlugatch. She was reluctant to give much information about herself. The following are songs which Mrs. Dlugatch sang for me. She claims they are old needle worker songs that were sung in the shops in Russia and in America. The songs are in Yiddish.

————— In the street goes a rain And the snow is falling, the
snow. My young years I have wasted Sitting all the time at sewing. Ever I sew, Ever I sew
—— All the time with the needle stitching. I have left no more strength. My bones are
broken, Ever I sew. Ever I sew ——— *****

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LOVE SONG The moon shines around you like the morning star. Should I ever see you
with me Would I you drench with tears. With tears would I drench you. You would so
become moulten — Cease my sweet life to cry. I will be with you often Often will you be
with me Woe is to me How can I live a day Oh my sweet Life without you ——— * * * * * 5

LOVE SONG

1. On the sea swims a little ship, Around and around with windows. From all the pictures I
have seen there You are the most beautiful

2. Like a murderer slaughters a person, Kills him with a knife, You have slaughtered me
But you did not finish slaughtering me. You are a murderer even bigger. * * * * *